



Why your sports club's HR is critical to outstanding performance

Whitepaper

IRIS. Look forward



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Why HR matters so much in sport: Maximising everyone's performance can give you the edge.

Within sport, it's possible to develop a culture of excellence that runs through a club, impacting the performance of everyone, from ticket-takers and volunteers through to business leaders and star players.

This isn't simply about redefining your mission statement; it's about creating an environment where everyone in your organisation can fulfil their potential— and you've given them the tools to make it happen. As a result, they feel connected and they know how their own talent ultimately contributes to success on the pitch. In a sense, each person can be a 'club legend' in their own right.

The result? You can expect greater commitment, increased productivity, and reduced costs as a business. You can help to bring about a winning culture and mindset that's remarkable, sustainable, and unmistakable. You can sense it, whoever you talk to, everywhere you go.

This white paper explores how you can advance this kind of transformation.

**Behind every team of stars,
there are dozens of employees
supporting them on and off
the pitch**



1 star = 20 to 40 employees

Typical ratio for an English Premier League football club.
Source: IRIS research

Sports clubs face a complex set of HR challenges >





Sports clubs have unique HR needs.

Many HR professionals at sports organisations turn in star performances, week in, week out — against tough opposition.

Even in stable times, sports clubs experience constant change. And HR teams bear the burden. It's not just the care required around onboarding packages for new stars joining the club, but the entire employee experience, from booking holidays and changing personal information, to getting payroll right. It's easy to get tripped up by the complexity around player salaries and bonuses, salary caps, and appearances.

HR teams also have to deal with the seasonal needs around staffing for mass events — and how to recruit and manage volunteers. Then comes the pressure of cutbacks or scaling up when budgets change dramatically because of cup runs, relegation, promotion, or entry into European tournaments. And then there are multiple employee policies on everything from disciplinary procedures to social media. Ensuring that personal data is secure can be a huge issue, and making sure that HR practices comply with regulatory requirements is essential.

Clubs often struggle to find HR solutions that fit and grow with them

While some clubs may still use spreadsheets to attempt to manage HR operations, others look for tech solutions to save time and cost, while increasing accuracy and performance. But this presents its own challenges — because clubs are identical in some ways and unique in others.

On the pitch, many teams are unable to get the right balance between defence and attack. And this is an apt illustration with HR systems. Some cover the basic functionality pretty well, but they feel inflexible and lack alignment to a club's specific needs.

What HR systems need to cover for sports clubs

60-70% Standard functionality
Taking care of the HR essentials

30-40% Bespoke services
What makes you different

Source: IRIS research

What's the outcome when things go wrong?

When things go wrong, heads can drop everywhere, including HR.

Without suitable HR systems to support every activity, sports clubs can experience the same problems as any other kind of company. Issues might occur in the handling of payroll, sick pay, holidays, new hires, or in all of the others areas that HR connects the business to its employees. Mistakes can happen, action is sometimes taken too late, or good opportunities are missed.

Employees often see HR as the embodiment of the club, especially as contact with HR is usually an employee's first experience when they join. So, when HR interactions feel friendly and helpful, caring and personal, responsive and capable — or vice versa — this shapes how they feel about their relationship with the club.

If morale and culture aren't effectively managed, plummeting morale can affect everyone, from the backroom to the boardroom. It can morph into a lack of ambition, including how you develop fresh talent, on and off the pitch. Problems can extend beyond the club too, with poor fan engagement impacting events, sales and loyalty.

HR teams can feel it the most

HR professionals are often bogged down with necessary, but not strategic, tasks such as data management, compliance and security. They didn't join the club to spend their time on labour-intensive tasks and get swallowed up with processes. Instead, they wanted to use their skills to help the club thrive. It's easy for them to feel disengaged too.

The danger is that clubs can sleep-walk into mediocrity. So what's the answer?



The sports sector can be impacted by people challenges, just the same as other industries



of UK workers are not stimulated by what they do^[1]



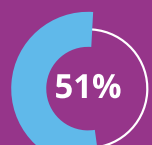
say they are not performing at their best or giving 100%^[1]



believe what they do isn't meaningful^[1]



of employees think their manager understands their problems and needs^[2]



of all work-related ill health cases are caused by stress, depression or anxiety^[3]

[1] Deloitte: Voice of the Workforce report

[2] Gartner HR survey, reported March 15, 2021

[3] HSE: Work-related stress, anxiety or depression statistics in Great Britain, 2020

Leaders can make the difference >



Strong leadership can be a game-changer. You also need the right HR tech to deploy your tactics.

Good leaders know their role is to inspire, influence, and support people's development and success at all levels. They want to build constructive relationships and sustainable results.

Leaders can't do this alone. But sports-focused HR software can allow them to change the game, quickly and effectively. The approach you take is key.

Putting a winning game-plan into action

There are three tactics that deliver exceptional results.

#1: Focus on connectivity:

In sport, sides fail when they don't perform as a team. Similarly, an HR system must bring people, data, and ways of working together within a single system to succeed. It's essential to bridge the gaps that can lead to problems. Once this happens, you can:

- > Build culture: You can connect HR with the way people think, feel and act. This is about fixing 'people gaps' and providing topical, refreshing engagement to develop your culture.
- > Accelerate efficiency: With an all-in-one system, you're able to rely on a single source of truth and optimise workflow, to free you up for strategic work. You can end the operational silos between HR and payroll and the business that held back productivity.
- > Drive performance: It's possible to align HR services with your club's corporate business

goals. You can measure your people initiatives, ongoing projects like diversity and inclusivity, and return on investment. More importantly than measuring them, you can design and execute them well.

#2: Customise to suit your needs:

The best solutions will cover HR core activities efficiently — and then give you the freedom and intuitive tools to customise at will. You can streamline and adapt processes to fit your organisation, so you embrace best practice, save time and improve outcomes. You can create bespoke queries, workflows and approval processes, enhanced dashboards and much more. HR teams can then also get rich performance insights and generate executive reports instantly for better decision-making.

#3: Unleash self-service, streamline and automate:

Enabling employee self-service can lift a heavy burden off managers. People can update their own records, request holidays, check their pay, answer surveys, manage their career progression, and many other tasks that normally take up a lot of HR time in basic admin. You can also streamline and automate many HR tasks. This can transform HR, as you save hours every week, boost accuracy, sharpen responsiveness and optimise your workforce in real-time.

So how does it feel for employees?

Every employee has the potential to be outstanding. Now you've got the tools to develop potential quickly, across your organisation.

Today, employees everywhere think more like consumers. They have high expectations at work and they assume everything should be digital, ultra-convenient, and available instantly.

With the right HR tech, you can stay engaged with everyone, from your coaching staff and catering team, to travel coordinators and match-day volunteers.

An extra player on your team

Some sports clubs use the IRIS Cascade HRi Mobile App. Branded for the club, the app enables employees to keep track of their pay, tasks and requests, wherever they're working.

Three changes your people will notice:

#1: They feel more connected: You can create people-centric journeys through your HR tech. You can reach all of them instantly, from office staff to volunteers. You don't need to rely on them checking important emails or letters by post. All their content is in one place — and they can manage their personal details, holiday, learning and much more through self-service. There's no frustration around waiting for managers to act.

#2: They help to shape your culture:

Once you're better connected with employees, it's easier to run programs that create a more agile, vibrant, and resilient culture. It's natural for them to be more engaged, feel more supported and share their feelings in surveys via the app. Timely and intuitive surveys give your people a voice. They can see their role matters to the performance of the club.

#3: They get the support they need to thrive:

The tech saves you from countless manual tasks that add no value, freeing up your HR team to focus more on the personal needs of each person. You can develop their potential so they excel in an environment where it feels great to work. You can create conditions that are more flexible and inclusive, promoting constant learning and self-development.



What might your ROI look like? ›



Achieving outstanding performance: What does a great return on investment look like?

With an all-in-one HR system that covers all your needs, it's possible for people to feel more empowered and motivated. You can develop a winning culture and mindset.

You can expect a noticeable payback too — in many key areas.

Better insights and decision-making

Your system keeps you connected and engaged with all your people, providing metrics that let you assess performance and wellbeing — and make smarter decisions, including tactical switches in the way you manage HR. With all the data at your fingertips, you can also confidently meet reporting requirements with ease, including Government legislation on equal pay, recruitment, diversity and employment procedures.

Greater focus on talent, less on admin

With a connected system, many of your existing ways of working can be transformed, saving time and money. You can streamline fundamental HR tasks such as onboarding, absences and leavers, while automating repetitive admin tasks such as authorising time-off, approving timesheets or concluding interviews. This frees up your team, so they can play to their strengths, focusing more on your people and talent agenda.



Robust security and compliance

You're no longer constantly worrying about someone dropping the ball when it comes to the confidential details around star players and other high-profile people at your club. Processes such as the protection, storage, and timely destruction of personal data can be automated. You can be assured of GDPR compliance, with sensitive employee information stored securely in a single database, rather than in disparate systems and paper records. And a cloud-based system has a higher degree of data security and protection than an on-premise one.

Stronger safeguarding

With the right HR system, you can tighten your defence, reducing the likelihood of bad experiences, mistakes due to ignorance, and other risks. Your employee handbooks and policies are all in one place, so people can find and follow them more easily. Should grievances arise, your system can record and store evidence with a useful timeline.

"Cascade is tailored to meet our individual organisation needs and has enabled us to streamline our processes and automate our administration. In addition, Cascade suits our organisation because we can scale up with the software as needed. We're very happy with IRIS".

Mary-Anne Price, HR Director, England Golf

Improved succession planning and loyalty

Happy and satisfied people are more likely to stay with a club, whether that's talent you're developing within business areas or youth players destined for the first team.

Flawless match-day organisation

Staying connected with variable workforces can be a challenge for clubs. But the right HR system with its own mobile app can ease the complexity around match days and other events. You can get greater certainty, avoid over-staffing costs and ensure better outcomes, maximising revenues and delivering superb fan experiences.



Thank You.

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